



NFYFC Agriculture and Rural Issues (AGRI) Steering Group Manifesto Points

The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC) is the head of a nationwide body of nearly 700 Young Farmers' Clubs (YFCs) located throughout England and Wales dedicated to supporting young people in agriculture and the countryside. Their memberships comprise approximately 24,000 young people aged between 10 and 26 years from a variety of backgrounds, who live or work in rural areas. NFYFC's core objectives are to provide opportunities for members to improve their personal skills and gain a sense of achievement through a variety of educational and social activities.

Members of the YFC organisation play an important role in current (and future) social and economic aspects of the rural community. They play a key role in the sustainability of rural environments and therefore have a great interest in maintaining viable conditions in which to live and work.

Particular areas of interest and concern include the following:

- **Retention of county council farms**

Retention of county council farms for environmental, educational and economic benefits as well as opportunities for new entrants and young farmers to pursue a farming career. The national agriculture and rural affairs committee has been pro-active in lobbying activities and recommendations for county farm estates' review policies as well as working with industry organisations to create tenancy training for its members in recognition of the competitiveness of securing a tenancy. The pilot and final regional training events developed was supported by Defra.

- **Affordable rural housing**

Affordable rural housing is an essential component for a sustainable and balanced rural community. NFYFC has undertaken a project in association with English Rural Housing Association aiming to help safeguard the future of farming by ensuring that the lack of affordable housing does not inhibit people from entering or staying in the industry. (NFYFC Affordable Rural Housing Survey¹ - <http://www.nfyfc.org.uk/news.html>) Following a recent rural housing discussion with YFC members, the English Rural Housing Association and the National Housing Federation (NHF), work is planned to emphasise the existing NFYFC/ERHA housing guide. It is our intention to work with ERHA and NHF to do the following:

- reiterate advice on campaigning on rural housing issues, for example, giving people ideas of how to influence their parish councils and an associated discussion forum on 'what works' so that they can share each others' experiences and successes in different areas.
- Highlight to interested YFC members examples of where rural housing has been built in a way that benefits the local community and the key methods used that made it successful. This would be particularly useful for those who may hold land and could be considering releasing land for affordable housing.
- Highlight media case studies to emphasise the need for more affordable housing in rural areas.

¹ NFYFC Affordable Rural Housing Survey

The problem encountered by YFC members is a lack of help and advice on the ground. Guidance notes alone will not help solve problems without regional/local extension workers. Housing enablers are an example that is beneficial to those in rural areas.

- **Better regulation**

Feedback from the 2009 NFYFC Agriculture and Rural Affairs Forum included a desire from YFC farming members for regulation that is not based on public acceptability and for provision of well-trained inspectors. NFYFC survey results from 2007² and 2009³ highlight bureaucracy as a factor that is off-putting for a career in farming.

- **Support for technical and scientific research**

Support for technical and scientific research which is essential for the agricultural and horticultural industries and promotion of careers advice. NFYFC has worked with industry and government partners on various educational projects, one of which highlights the importance of science in the farming and growing industries and future opportunities for scientific careers. Feedback from the 2009 NFYFC Agriculture and Rural Affairs Forum included a request for better careers advice for those considering a future in agriculture, a view which was supported by *Your Future in Farming Survey 2009*ⁱ results. This also supports aims of the AgriSkills strategy to deliver increased professionalism in the industry.

- **Broadband and communications availability and quality in rural areas**

Rural communities cannot function adequately either in business or socially if there is not adequate provision of technology. There needs to be parity in services between rural and urban environments. Lack of rural availability is a barrier to business set up and expansion and thus detrimental for the future rural economy. Poor mobile phone reception also contributes to the last point and can be a potential Health & Safety issue in regard of lone workers.

It is considered that all of the above points will contribute to essential farming and food production for the growing UK and world populations and the recommended increase in production.

- **Research**

NFYFC research in association with Lantra - *Your Future and Farming Survey 2009* - highlighted YFC members' aspirations for their future in farming. Results are available from the NFYFC *Your Future and Farming Survey 2007* and the NFYFC Farming Opportunity Matching Service feasibility study⁴ as discussed at the September 2012 Farming Ladder Seminar at Highgrove and the results of which will shortly be published.

- **Skills and training**

Skills and training are of particular interest for NFYFC. YFC members will engage in skills' acquisition and training on three levels: personal development, continuous professional development (CPD) and business development as the age range and expectation of the organisation is diverse. Again, another outcome of the NFYFC Agriculture and Rural Affairs Forum was a willingness from YFC members to take on succession and business advice to improve future business opportunities.

² NFYFC Your Future and Farming Survey 2007

³ NFYFC Your Future and Farming Survey 2009

⁴ NFYFC Defra-funded Farming Opportunity Matching Service 2012



- **Promotion of the agricultural and horticultural industry**

YFC members also appreciate the need for (and contribute to) promotion of the industry, inclusion of food and farming subjects in the national curriculum and the need for more effective careers advice.

NFYFC has provided representatives for steering/working groups or committees for the following government and industry initiatives: Fresh Start, Tenancy Reform Industry Group (TRIG), Lantra's Agricultural Livestock and Crops Industry Groups, Year of Food and Farming, the Agri-Skills Forum Management Group, Defra CAP Reform steering group and the Defra Green Food Project steering group in order to represent a voice for young people and show commitment to the future of the industry. As a recipient of Defra funding for components of its agricultural and training program, NFYFC will continue to integrate government policy (forthcoming Defra 25 Year Plan) in its skills, training and HSE work.

- **Promoting the Agricultural Sector using social media**

Where possible the AGRI Steering Group will use social media to promote the agricultural sector and the work of the steering group and NFYFC.

- **Safety and training for a safer and more profitable industry**

YFCs are proud of their competitions and training which reflect the importance of safety in the workplace. A safe industry is a more profitable industry and YFC members continue to strive to highlight the issue and provide advice and training accordingly.

- **Farm to Fork Education**

Where possible it is important for NFYFC to be involved with projects promoting Farm to Fork education for children and adults. Through membership of the AHDB Education Board we work with the Department of Education in conjunction with industry organisations to ensure that Field to Fork education is provided in schools.

Through School Farm Clubs we also promote agricultural education and highlight the importance of retention of school farms and clubs.

AGRI will work with the NFYFC Youth Forum to further develop NFYFCs Field to Fork educational activities.

- **CEJA – European Council of Young Farmers**

Membership of CEJA gives NFYFC a chance to interact with other similar rural youth organisations across Europe. CEJA provides NFYFC members a chance to represent themselves in the European Parliament, speak to MEPs and put across their opinions to try to influence legislation on agricultural and rural issues which will affect their day to day lives.

- **Participation in industry consultations**

Where appropriate, NFYFC will collate the views of members in order to respond to relevant industry consultations. This will be done via AGRI and members will therefore be collectively responsible for opinions of the members they represent.

- **Future CAP reform**

In anticipation Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform, YFC members were involved in joint surveying between NFYFC and Lantra for future skills and training support and discussion was held with representatives from Defra and the EU. Position papers were written and submitted to Defra officials, a Defra CAP Reform consultation response was submitted in 2012 and YFC representatives attended Defra CAP reform



stakeholder group meetings. Position papers were shared with CEJA (European Council of Young Farmers) for lobbying activities. Young Farmers opinions were noted on the following issues:

- Realising available support for young farmers
- Recognising the considerable contribution young farmers have made in their efforts to establish continuous professional development, training and business skills and promoting the industry with nominal support
- A robust food security policy to encourage and support existing young farmers and new entrants, which should include support for research and development and good environmental practice.

2015/16 Themes

- ☑ Give YFC members a national voice on industry-related matters, including the current Defra 25 Year Plan and to collaborate with industry organisations
- ☑ Promote the YFC profile for future support and funding opportunities
- ☑ Help promote food and farming education and careers
- ☑ Develop and provide training opportunities, resources, study tours and visits for YFC members
- ☑ Help promote [farm safety](#).
- ☑ Be available for advice and information to YFC members and staff
- ☑ Develop and host the NFYFC [AGRI Forum](#) on the Saturday of Annual Convention – open invitation for YFC members, friends and guests to join in with discussion, see industry exhibits and hear latest news from YFC and industry experts – look out for a dedicated NFYFC AGRI Forum Facebook event.

NFYFC Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
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